



Dana E. Blackwell
Executive Director

LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

COMMISSIONERS:
CAROL O. BIONDI, VICE CHAIR
PATRICIA CURRY
HON. JOYCE FAHEY
ANN FRANZEN
HELEN A. KLEINBERG
DAISY MA, VICE CHAIR
DR. LA-DORIS MCCLANEY
REV. CECIL L. MURRAY
SANDRA RUDNICK
ADELINA SORKIN, LCSW/ACSW
DR. HARRIETTE F. WILLIAMS, CHAIR
STACEY F. WINKLER

APPROVED MINUTES

The General Meeting of the Commission for Children and Families was held on Monday, **July 18, 2005**, in room 140 of the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles. **Please note that these minutes are intended as a summary and not as a verbatim transcription of events at this meeting.**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT (Quorum Established)

Carol O. Biondi
Patricia Curry
Joyce Fahey
Ann Franzen
Helen Kleinberg
Daisy Ma
Dr. La-Doris McClaney
Rev. Cecil L. Murray
Adelina Sorkin
Dr. Harriette F. Williams
Stacey F. Winkler

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused/Unexcused)

Sandra Rudnick

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The agenda for the July 18, 2005, meeting was unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the April 18, 2005, general meeting were unanimously approved.

The minutes of the June 6, 2005, general meeting were unanimously approved.

CHAIR'S REPORT

- Chair Williams welcomed new Commissioners Rev. Cecil L. Murray, appointed by Supervisor Burke, and Ann Franzen, appointed by Supervisor Knabe. Only three members are now needed to complete the Commission's membership.
- Chair Williams congratulated long-time Department of Children and Family Services partner Amaryllis Watkins on her promotion to deputy director for Service Bureau 2. She will manage the emergency response command post, the child protection hotline, and regional offices in SPAs 4, 5, and 6.
- Chair Williams, Commissioner Sorkin, and Dana Blackwell attended the Child Welfare League of America's conference in Pasadena recently. Commissioner Sorkin attended one workshop about the importance of connections between siblings in care, and another, led by former emancipated youth, that gave attendees the flavor of 'being in the system.' Chair Williams mentioned a workshop on a Seattle program that establishes resource cottages to provide respite services for children experiencing problems in nearby group homes. Commissioner Curry was reminded of the work done by the placement task force led by former Commissioner Hal Brown to develop community respite services for relative caregivers, foster parents, and group homes. Chair Williams suggested that this model be incorporated in the group home recommendations that Ms. Blackwell is monitoring.
- On Monday, July 25, at 11:30 a.m., the Commission chair and co-chairs will meet with Board of Supervisors deputies to talk about the present and the future; all Commissioners are welcome to attend.
- On Friday, July 29, at 2:00 p.m., a meeting with Dr. Sanders and his executive team will consider the continuum of care report, fact sheet data, and the department's fiscal and programmatic focus and strategies for the new fiscal year.
- An election of the Commission's officers is set for September 19, and a retreat to consider its direction for the upcoming year will be scheduled soon thereafter. Chair Williams suggested a retreat date of October 17, which will allow new officers time to prepare, or November 7. Ms. Blackwell will survey members on their availability.
- Chair Williams recently presented a certificate of appreciation to Gwen Bartholomew, co-chair of Grandma's Angels, on her relocation to Texas. Bonnie De La Cruz will continue as co-chair of the kinship organization, and Ms. Bartholomew will continue to be involved long-distance.
- As the Commission's representative to the county's Education Coordinating Council, Chair Williams visited San Pasqual in San Diego, in preparation for the ECC's discussion of residential academies at its upcoming meeting. She found it an interesting and successful venture of community, county, and private partnerships.
- First 5 L.A. has approved Partnering for Families, a plan authored by Dr. Sanders.

- Youth Yellow Pages were distributed to all Commissioners and additional copies are available in the office.
- Contracts for promoting safe and stable families will be effective as of August 1; the contractor list must go to the Board for approval before being made public.
- Since the last Commission meeting, Commissioner Winkler has been receiving notifications of child fatalities. Twenty-eight children have died since June 6, 2005, 8 of whom were known to the department, and 19 of whom were reported to have had no departmental history. She has asked for more information, but County Counsel has declined to release it. Though she was told that it is not the Commission's role to investigate these deaths nor to identify systemic problems leading to child fatalities, she urged Commissioners to seek representation on bodies that deal with this issue.

Commissioner Fahey mentioned the new oversight committee being created by Supervisor Molina through the Inspector General's office, and volunteered to represent the Commission on that body. She has previously served on the child death review committee through the Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN), which investigates all child fatalities in the county, not just deaths in care. ICAN includes law enforcement, medical, and legal personnel.

Vice Chair Biondi recalled that, in the past, reports made available to Commissioners gave the child's age, the type of death, and the number of departmental referrals—limited information, but helpful in tracking certain trends. Now, however, notifications contain less data, and only about half are being received by either Commissioners or the Board of Supervisors.

Prior to the Board's creation of the office of the inspector general, the Commission performed death reviews; once Victor Greenberg was hired, his office did a comprehensive job of independent investigation and reported to the Commission regularly. Since his resignation over a year ago, the post has been vacant, and the Board has allowed the department to perform reviews in-house. According to Dr. Sophy, a departmental committee reviews all deaths and passes systemic issues to the executive team. Reviews need an independent eye, Vice Chair Biondi said, and the Commission should be a part of any process. A blanket court order has been in place for more than 15 years to allow Commissioners to read case files.

Acknowledging that the Commission has been aware of this problem for some time, Chair Williams asked that Commissioners Winkler and Fahey co-chair a small work group to strategize on options to coordinate with ICAN, the department, and the new oversight committee requested by Supervisor Molina. They will bring their recommendations to the next Commission meeting.

In addition, the Board of Supervisors should be encouraged to hire an inspector general, preferably someone with a legal background. In the interim, Ms. Blackwell will set up a meeting with Brandon Nichols of County Counsel to talk about Commissioners receiving more information. In the 20 years that the Commission has performed

case reviews and death reviews, there has never been a complaint about its role, and Commissioners have never endangered confidentiality.

- Joan Smith's committee, which has dealt with various kinship issues, is changing its name to the Permanency Committee. Its new focus will be on identifying systemic barriers to achieving permanency for children in the dependency court system. Chair Williams asked Commissioner Curry to serve, and will work with Judge Nash, who also has a permanency committee. Commissioner Curry suggested that the work of former Commissioner Hurewitz's long-time committee on legal permanency be passed on.

CONTINUUM OF CARE

Commissioner Kleinberg provided background on the continuum of care documents, which arose from the efforts of the prevention, reunification, and permanency work groups. Reports from those groups, now a part of the way the department tries to function, are being synthesized in graphic form for a presentation to the Board of Supervisors this fall. The committee is partnering with the Chief Administrative Office's Service Integration Branch to take the document to various stakeholders for feedback.

The document, now called Family County Community Continuum of Care (FC4), begins with a set of principles for the partnership to support families and children:

- It is family-focused and strengths-based.
- It uses a community-based service delivery.
- It advocates a coordinated and integrated service support system.
- It will include performance-based outcomes and evaluation.

The first graphic page represents the elements needed for well children and youth, healthy families, and strong communities. The second and third graphics pages lay out the role of county departments in prevention support (primary), voluntary support (secondary), and crisis-mandatory (tertiary) services. Commissioner Sorkin recommended adding family support services into the primary prevention circles, since they are provided to families who are not yet in the system.

The committee is considering asking an artist to help with the diagram design to make it **more** clearer. Commissioner Fahey suggested perhaps using someone who does GIS mapping to make the layers of information more meaningful. Commissioner Kleinberg encouraged anyone with ideas or additions to contact her.

Some of the changes suggested at a recent meeting with SPA 8 stakeholders were discussed, including the feeling of many parents that the system often concentrates on their deficits and fails to treat them as equals. The committee's intention is to maintain a strengths-based foundation and use language sensitive to those concerns. With regard to the need for valid baseline data, Commissioner Kleinberg said that data is available from many sources, but it's also necessary to identify what is not being collected, as well as the most critical data for indicating progress.

The report is still open to contributions, and input from the full Commission. Children's Planning Council will be solicited prior to the document's being presented to the Commission for final approval. Chair Williams suggested that it be a topic for one of the Commission's three panels at the court's Partnership Conference on November 10, and reminded Commissioners to ensure that the office has received their resumes for that conference.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ACT/PROPOSITION 63 PLANNING

Funding deliberations for Proposition 63, the Mental Health Services Act, have been ongoing since April, and Commissioner Curry has been intensively involved. DMH director Marv Southard appointed between 70 and 80 stakeholder delegates, each of whom has an alternate or multiple alternates. Dr. Sophy is the delegate from DCFS, with Lisa Parrish and Commissioner Curry as his alternates.

For the first year of MHSA funding, Los Angeles County will receive an estimated \$250 million, which has been divided into four phases: a community service support plan, prevention (awaiting guidelines from the state), intervention (also awaiting guidelines), and housing.

Once guidelines were received for the first phase, delegates were divided into three main groups—children, adults, and older adults—and a smaller group to consider the concerns of underrepresented ethnic populations. On the advice of the Commission and the emancipation partnership, a fourth major group was incorporated for transition-age youth (TAY), whose statistics show them leaving the system at age 18 and reappearing at about age 31 needing serious help. Cora Fullmore and Commissioner Curry co-chair the TAY group, which meets weekly. Subgroups on systems navigation, transition research, housing, and probation are also meeting regularly.

As part of the complicated formula directing funds among the four major groups, TAY received \$14 million to plan for in each of the first three years. One of its recommendations is expanding the existing transition resource centers (TRCs) to serve not only emancipating foster and probation youth, but all transition-age youth in the community, performing preliminary assessments and helping them navigate the mental health system and identify needed services. Eight TRCs are currently in operation, some for four or five years, and two more are in the pipeline. A total of two in each SPA are planned.

Proposals from TAY and the children's group were accepted by the delegates last Monday, and the adult and older-adult group proposals are scheduled for approval tomorrow. Recommendations will then be taken to community meetings and to the Mental Health Commission for feedback, then return to the delegates for revision. (One internal controversy is whether planning should follow the boundaries of the county's SPAs or the SACs used by DMH.) Following that, it will be reviewed again by the Mental Health Commission and by the Board of Supervisors in late September, then proceed to the state for approval.

Commissioner Curry said that being properly prepared to advocate for dollars was difficult because of the speed of the process, and urged the Commission to organize and

become knowledgeable and involved in the upcoming prevention and intervention groups.

Work groups will also be formed to design the details of implementation, which is another opportunity to be heard. Services and budgets are being discussed independently, and advocates should be present at funding discussions. One issue, Ms. Parrish said, was that of focal populations versus the broad availability of services. Some youth are excluded from Proposition 63 dollars because they are eligible for Medi-Cal and other insurance, but wraparound services are still needed, and matches with other services such as EPSDT can be managed more effectively.

MHSA funds were meant to start flowing on July 1 of this year, but since counties have not submitted their plans, January is the earliest money will be available. The state has agreed to make \$45 million in one-time dollars available then, to be divided between the four major groups and spent before July 1, 2006. TAY has presented its recommendations for these funds, but other groups have not. One problem is the fluid nature of the guidelines, since the state is constantly changing decisions, terminology, and funding conclusions.

The Commission has two meetings scheduled in August, and Chair Williams suggested that it devote a major part of one of them to this item. She also asked that chairs' meetings be scheduled at 8:30 a.m. on August 1 and August 15 for these discussions. Staff will help follow through on this phase of the plan and organize for the next phase.

KATIE A. UPDATE

Brandon Nichols from County Counsel offered background on the Katie A. decision. More than two years ago, a group of plaintiffs sued Los Angeles County for not providing adequate mental health services within the foster care system and to those at risk for entering the system. The case was settled with an agreement (which expired Saturday) that the county would improve its service delivery system. The court appointed a compliance-monitoring panel whose latest report, issued on June 16, maintains that the county has not met its obligations. An agreement extension of another year was negotiated and filed with the court last week; it is expected to be granted.

Joan Smith from DCFS and Susan Kerr from DMH, along with the Chief Administrative Office, are heading the team that is drafting the county's response to the panel's report and formulating a corrective action plan. This plan will be a series of specific steps to be taken within one year, based on existing funding and resources, to assess children for mental health services and provide those services.

Because the children affected by the Katie A. agreement are already on Medi-Cal, they have not been given a priority in the Proposition 63 discussions. Delegates have been sensitive to not using MHSA monies for anything mandated by lawsuit or already planned for.

Commissioner Winkler expressed concerns over the very strong language of the panel's report, particularly the statement that panel members could not get information in a

timely fashion from DCFS. Mr. Nichols acknowledged that data and information-sharing has been an issue and that a subcommittee has been formed to focus on the panel's access. Problems included inaccurate information, DMH's changeover in computer systems, and needed data that has never been tracked.

The corrective action plan will address improvements in these and other areas, providing a clear plan or roadmap for where the county is today, where it needs to go, the specific steps needed to get there, and milestones to measure its progress. Plaintiffs' counsel Kim Lewis agreed that a strategic plan has always been desired, and the court's jurisdiction over the agreement would have continued until compliance was achieved.

A lack of focus was cited as a source of overall frustration with the process. Though the court's objectives were delineated in 2002, Mr. Nichols said that the panel, the county, and the plaintiffs have not always agreed on how to meet them. The plan being developed will present a concrete written list of steps, taking into consideration both the financial and service sides of both departments. This is systems reform, Mr. Nichols emphasized, and will need to flow down from the top to the regional offices and front-line staff.

According to Dr. Sophy, the plan is in its fourth or fifth draft; once department directors sign off on it, County Counsel will review it prior to a meeting with the panel on July 27.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no request for public comment.

MEETING ADJOURNED